
Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity E (Grades 9-12)

- Content Standard 5:** Students will research, evaluate and apply cultural and historical information to make artistic choices.
- Performance Standard:** a. communicate information to peers about people, events, time and place related to classroom dramatizations
- Content Standard 8:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of context by analyzing and comparing theatre in various cultures and historical periods.
- Performance Standards:** a. compare similar themes in drama from various cultures and historical periods, create informal and formal performances using these themes, and discuss how theatre can reveal universal concepts
c. identify cultural and historical sources of American theatre and musical theatre

Learning Activity. Students research Commedia del' Arte and its relationship to the Renaissance. The class discusses and compares the stereotypical characters, situations and events of Commedia del' Arte to contemporary "situation comedy." They are then asked to improvise scenes based on the stereotypical characters of Commedia del' Arte and, further, to translate these "types" into scripted scenes featuring contemporary characterizations. The scripted scenes are performed, edited and evaluated based on their success in translating the concepts.

Alternative Activities. Students could compare how original plays are adapted to other art forms (e.g., movies, musicals, operas, ballets). They could compare how different playwrights or visual artists interpret a particular story or theme. They could investigate a concept such as "masks" or "clowns" throughout history and across cultures.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity F (Grades K-4)

- Content Standard 6:** Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.
- Performance Standards:** a. describe characteristics and compare the presentation of characters, environments and actions in theatre, dance and visual arts
c. select movement, music or visual elements to enhance the mood of a classroom dramatization

Learning Activity. For an integrated unit involving social studies, language arts, science, theatre, visual arts and music, students read and research legends about the Sun in various cultures. They then write and illustrate their own Sun legends. Props and scenery are designed and made, and the legends are mimed to the accompaniment of "Greek chorus" (choral narrative or reading). Orff instruments are used for musical accompaniment, and some excerpts can be set to simple pentatonic music. The "performances" are shared with other classes and/or parents.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity G (Grades K-4)

Content Standard 5: Students will research, evaluate and apply cultural and historical information to make artistic choices.

Performance Standard: a. communicate information to peers about people, events, time and place related to classroom dramatizations

Learning Activity. For a homework assignment, students draw a map of their community's main street to share in class in order to create an imaginary dramatization which will take place on that street. The map must include significant landmarks, such as schools, churches, shops, etc. In groups of two or three they improvise a scene connected to one of the landmarks and deal with a contemporary issue.

Next, they research pictures of how the street looked 50 years ago, in order to create a dramatization from that time. As with the first improvisation, the map must contain landmarks and the scene should deal with an issue of that time which was discovered as part of the research.

Scenes will be evaluated based on the accuracy of the maps and historical significance of the issues selected. The success of the acting also will be assessed, based on traditional critique of voice, movement and blocking.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity H (Grades 5-8)
(Interdisciplinary Activity: Theatre And Health)

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

Performance Standard: a. describe characteristics and compare the presentation of characters, environments and actions in theatre, dance and visual arts

Content Standard 7: Students will analyze, critique and construct meanings from works of theatre.

Performance Standard: c. use articulated criteria to describe, analyze and constructively evaluate the effectiveness of artistic choices in dramatic performances

Learning Activity. After creating short, improvised scenes in pairs on the theme of "playground arguments," the students watch each scene. Scenes must have a beginning, middle and end. The "argument" must be resolved within the scene and should be performed in a way to create believable characters in a believable context.

The teacher then leads the class in a group critique by asking questions which check first for the audience's understanding of the "arguments" and then for the quality of the performances. Sample questions: Did you believe in this argument? What was it about? Did the pair resolve their argument, or do you think they will go on arguing? Could you hear them? Did their movement and body language help you to believe in this argument? What other artistic choices (props, costumes, blocking, etc.) helped the audience understand the context?

The students then view an excerpt from a children's video in which two characters are arguing. The teacher divides the students into small groups to answer the above sample questions in relation to the video excerpt. Each group then presents and supports its ideas to the class. Students should be directed to discuss how the theatre pieces help them to understand the issues addressed in the class scenes as well as in the video.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity I (At Three Grade Levels)

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters.

Learning Activity. Using props and/or costumes as stimuli, students develop a scene with a beginning, middle and end. The scene must contain characters, a problem and a setting. Students work individually or in small groups to prepare their scenes. They share their imagined ideas with each other, try out ideas, make choice and begin to develop the story. They rehearse the evolving scene, experiment and plan further, making final decisions. All scenes are performed for the entire class and a discussion follows.

This task is interpreted for three grade clusters as follows:

CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Grades K-4

1: a

Grades 5-8

1: a and b
2: a and b

Grades 9-12

1: a and b
2: a, b and c

GRADE-LEVEL VARIATIONS ON TASKS

Students base character/setting on the chosen prop or costume. Performances probably will be solos and duets. At this early stage, "character" and "setting" are more important and appropriate than "problem."

Students base improvisations on the chosen prop or costume. The challenge is for students to work in groups of five or fewer. Collaborative decision making and cooperation are essential to success on this task. In addition to "character" and "setting," this age group must demonstrate "problem" or "conflict" within the scene.

Within the given improvisations, students may emphasize the significance of the chosen prop or costume. Students must demonstrate all elements in creating the scenes. Elements include "character," "setting," "problem" and the structure of beginning, middle and end.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity J (At Three Grade Levels)

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters.

Content Standard 7: Students will analyze, critique and construct meanings from works of theatre.

Learning Activity. Students view part of a silent movie without subtitles, or an excerpt from a movie or video without sound, and discuss how the movements and body language helped to clarify the character and the character's feelings. They then are assigned the homework task of observing someone carefully, in order to be able to describe the particular movements and mannerisms of that person and to be able to imitate (not parody) them as precisely as possible. In class, after demonstrations, students again discuss how the body reveals the personality or mood of the person studied. They take turns using physicalizations to express feelings/emotions/conditions, such as anger, fear, timidity, shyness, joy, sorrow, depression, age, anxiety, humor, and threat. They then discuss the difference between using the whole body or one part, and when each might be appropriate.

Students then are assigned a character from a story from literature or a scene excerpted from a play and are asked to create physicalizations (movements, gestures, stances, walks, mannerisms, facial expressions) which help to define the character. They perform the scene for their peers and teacher, who offer feedback on the communicative power of their choices.

This task is interpreted for three grade clusters as follows:

CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Grades K-4
2: a and b

Grades 5-8
2: a, b and c
7: b

Grades 9-12
2: a, b and c
7: a, c and d

GRADE-LEVEL VARIATIONS ON TASKS

Students point out gestures and movements identified with specific storybook characters. Students discuss these gestures and movements and what they represent (feelings, personality, attitude). They then discuss what kind of gestures or movements would best suit the characters in their scene/story, and act out that scene/story.

Students view gestures and mannerisms of people around them and discuss how they reflect their emotions and attitudes. They analyze the text of their scenes and make decisions about what kinds of physicalizations would best help to interpret the characters' feelings, attitudes and personalities. They incorporate these ideas into their performances.

Students analyze text and write complete biographies and descriptions of physicalizations for the characters. They incorporate these into their stage directions and use them in their performances. They videotape their performances and analyze the effectiveness of their choices in clarifying the characterization. They then edit and refine the physicalizations and videotape the new performances, again analyzing and refining.

Illustrative Learning/Assessment Activity K (At Three Grade Levels)

- Content Standard 1:** Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.
- Content Standard 5:** Students will research, evaluate and apply cultural and historical information to make artistic choices.
- Content Standard 6:** Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.
- Content Standard 7:** Students will analyze, critique and construct meanings from works of theatre.

Learning Activity. Through the study of masks from various cultures and historical periods, students analyze the relationship between ritual and theatre performances. Students view videos on, read about and research the topic. They then create an original scene involving the use of music, movement and masks which they have designed and constructed. Performances then are videotaped and critiqued.

This task interpreted for three grade clusters as follows:

CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ADDRESSED**Grades K-4**

1: a and b

Grades 5-8

1: a and b

5: a

6: c

Grades 9-12

1: a and b

5: a

6: c and d

7: d

GRADE-LEVEL VARIATIONS ON TASKS

Students look at books and read stories and legends about masks. They then read (or have read to them) a legend or story which they will convert into a scene with masks. They create the masks, choose music and create movement for their characters. They present the scenes for their peers and/or parents.

Students complete research and then analyze the use of masks in theatre of various cultures. They then select scenes to interpret, using masks which they create, as well as music and movement.

Students complete research, then analyze the evolution of masks from ritual to theatre, and their uses in various cultures. In groups, they select a culture, era or style to represent (e.g., Greek, Commedia del' Arte, Noh, Native American, etc.). They script original scenes, create original masks, create and/or select appropriate music and movement, and perform.

Glossary For Theatre Standards

Action. The core of a theatre piece; the sense of forward movement created by the sense of time and/or the physical and psychological motivations of characters.

Aesthetic criteria. Criteria developed about the visual, aural and oral aspects of the witnessed event derived from cultural and emotional values and cognitive meaning.

Aesthetic qualities. The emotional values and cognitive meanings derived from interpreting a work of art; the symbolic nature of art.

Artistic choices. Selections made by theatre artists about situation, action, direction and design in order to convey meaning.

Classical. A dramatic form and production techniques considered of significance in earlier times in any culture or historical period.

Classroom dramatizations. The act of creating character, dialogue, action and environment for the purpose of exploration, experimentation and study in a setting where there is no formal audience observation except for that of fellow students and teachers.

Constructed meaning. The personal understanding of dramatic/artistic intentions and actions and their social and personal significance, selected and organized from the aural, oral and visual symbols of a dramatic production.

Drama. The art of composing, writing, acting or producing plays; a literary composition intended to portray life or character or to tell a story – usually involving conflicts and emotions exhibited through action and dialogue – designed for theatrical performance.

Dramatic media. Means of telling stories by way of stage, film, television, radio or computer discs.

Electronic media. Means of communication characterized by the use of technology, e.g., radio, computers, virtual reality.

Ensemble. The dynamic interaction and harmonious blending of the efforts of the many artists involved in the dramatic activity of theatrical production.

Environment. Physical surroundings that establish place, time and atmosphere/mood; the physical conditions that reflect and affect the emotions, thoughts and actions of characters.

Formal production. The staging of a dramatic work for presentation for an audience.

Front of house. Box office and lobby.

Improvisation. The spontaneous use of movement and speech to create a character or object in a particular situation.

Informal production. The exploration of all aspects of a dramatic work (such as visual, oral, aural) in a setting where experimentation is emphasized. Similar to classroom dramatizations, with classmates and teachers as the usual audience.

New art forms. The novel combination of traditional arts and materials with emerging technology, such as performance art, videodiscs and virtual reality.

Role. The characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual in a given position, e.g., mother, employer. Role portrayal is likely to be more predictable and one-dimensional than character portrayal.

Script. The written dialogue, description and directions provided by the playwright.

Social pretend play. When two or more children engage in unsupervised enactments; participants use the play to explore social skills and understandings.

Tension. The atmosphere created by unresolved, disquieting or inharmonious situations that human beings feel compelled to address.

Text. The basis of dramatic activity and performance; a written script or an agreed-upon structure and content for an improvisation.

Theatre. The imitation/representation of life performed for other people; the performance of dramatic literature; drama; the milieu of actors and playwrights; the place that is the setting for dramatic performances. A performing art form which includes live improvised and scripted work as well as film, television and other electronic media.

Theatre literacy. The ability to create, perform, perceive, analyze, critique and understand dramatic performances.

Traditional forms. Forms that use time-honored theatrical practices.

Unified production concept. A brief statement, metaphor or expression of the essential meaning of a play that orders and patterns all the play's parts; a perceptual device used to evoke associated visual and aural presuppositions serving to physicalize and unify the production values of a play.

